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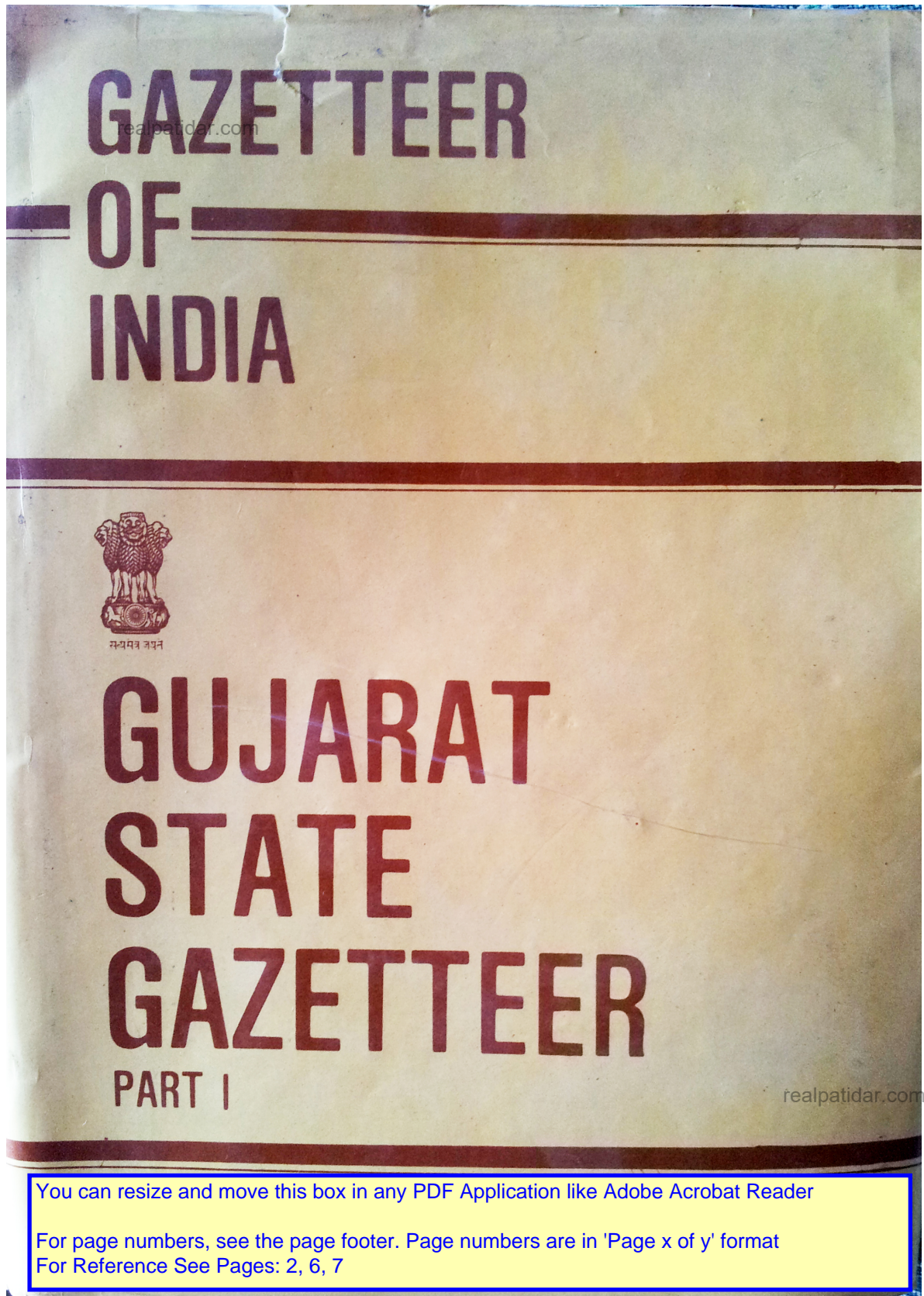
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**GAZETTEER OF INDIA**  
**Government of Gujarat**

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**GUJARAT**  
**STATE**  
**GAZETTEER**

**PART—I**

Deputy Chief Editors  
U. M. Chokshi (Retd.)  
M. R. Trivedi

realpatidar.com

**GANDHINAGAR**  
**1989**

વર્ષ ૧૯૮૯



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**GAZETTEER OF INDIA  
GUJARAT STATE GAZETTEER**

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Printed in India by the Manager, Government Photolitho Press and Photo Registry,  
Ahmadabad, and Published by the Director, Government Printing, Stationery and  
Publications, Gujarat State, Ahmadabad.

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## GUJARAT STATE GAZETTEER

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Guj. Gaz. (H) 38- 1.



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of toleration. The Muslims are divided into two sects viz., the Sunnis and the Shiah<sup>14</sup>.

**Pirana Sect:** A peculiar sect called Pirana has its followers among both Hindus and Muslims. It has got its name from the village of Pirana, 16 km., south-east of Ahmadabad. It is said that one Iman Shah, a Shiah Ismailia Saiyad, converted many Hindus of the Kanbi caste early in the 16th century by showing them the miraculous powers of his faith.

**Christianity:** Christianity is one of the great religions of the world. It originated in the land of Palestine in the Middle East. Christianity teaches the fatherhood of god and, therefore, the brotherhood of men. It expresses that god is the 'Loving Father'. The sacred book "The Bible" emphasised love, mercy, justice, and holiness. The Christian religion has three main sections, viz., Roman Catholics, Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The first two of these are found in Gujarat. In Gujarat Christianity was spread by the Portuguese during the Sultanate period. Mughal emperor Akbar granted permission to Christians to build churches at Khambhat and Ahmadabad. During the British rule this religion was further propagated in Gujarat through the Missionary Schools, dispensaries, hospitals as well as through the translation of the Christian religious books. There was widespread conversion to Christianity particularly from among the Harijans on account of the policy of the British to grant concessions in respect of service as well as acquiring residential accommodation. The places famous for the Christians in Gujarat are Diu, Daman, Surat, Borsad, Rajkot, Porbandar and Ahmadabad.

**Zoroastrianism<sup>15</sup> (Religion of Parsis):** The religion of the Parsis preaches universal monotheism. Its fundamental principles are good thoughts, good speech and good actions, love of god, love of truth, and charity in all its connotations. It was propounded by Asho Zarathustra, a Persian. Their original scripture is generally known as Avesta, and it is composed in one of the ancient Iranian languages. According to Zoroastrianism, there is one Almighty god, known in the Avesta as Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Wisdom), and as Ohrmazd or Hormazd in later connotations. The chief object of Parsi worship is Fire and the fire temple (called Parsi Agiari) is the public place of Parsi worship. Besides the leading rites and ceremonies called *Jashan*,

*Gambhar* and *Muktad*, Parsis have many minor practices and observances, to which more or less a religious sanctity is attached. Udvada in Valsad district is the most sacred place of Parsis. In the Fire-temple here, the original fire which they brought from Persia, called Atash Behram is installed. Besides Udvada, Agiaries are situated at Valsad, Ahmadabad and Surat.

**Prarthana Samaj:** In 1887 a theistic society called the Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society) was formed by Dr. Atmaram Pandurang (1823-1898). Its aims were theistic worship and social reforms. In Gujarat, the Prarthana Samaj was established at Ahmadabad on 17th December, 1871. It originated from the Dharma Sabha established by (late) Shri Bholanath Sarabhai and (late) Shri Ranchhodlal Chhotalal. There were two types of memberships in the Ahmadabad Prarthana Sabha. The first type had to take an oath against idol worship, though religious ceremony at marriage and other occasions was allowed to be performed. The second type had to take an oath for daily worship and respect for the dictums of the Society.

**Cardinal Principles of Faith:** God, the creator of this universe, is eternal, spiritual, infinite, the repository of all good, indivisible joy, without parts, without form, one without a second, the ruler of all pervading, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, almighty, merciful, all-holy and the saviour of sinners. His worship alone leads to happiness in this world and the next. Love with faith in Him, praying and singing to Him spiritually with those feelings and doing the things which please Him constitute His true worship. Prarthana Samajists believe that God does not incarnate himself. To worship and pray to images and other created objects is not a true mode of divine adoration. All human beings are his children.

**Theosophists:** Theosophists once influenced many intellectuals in the State. It is not a separate religious order. The Theosophical Society became very popular because of its association with Mrs. Annie Besant and others, who were participants of the Home Rule Movement in India. Among its followers are Parsis, Hindus, Jains, Christians and also some Muslims. It believes in Yoga, occult practices, incarnation, realization, Karma, etc. It has its own order of great souls. It has its forms, ceremonies, prayers, organisation, etc.



The Chauhans were traditionally agriculturists, but having come to towns, they have taken to subordinate services, labour and small trade. They do not perform the *satwansa* and the *bismillah* ceremonies. They are Sunni and observe all Sunni festivals.

The Dhobis are a service community. The *Jamatbandi* system among the Dhobis is strict.

The Kharwa (Muslim) is a community of boatmen, found around the major rivers in central and south Gujarat and on the sea coast. Their original name was Nakhuda, which means a ship-owner or a captain. Many of them still retain the surname Nakhuda. They follow Refai family. They are now engaged in various odd jobs.

The Maliks claim to have descended from soldiers, who came with the Muslim invaders from the north. The Mansuri-Tantgara is one of those instances where two separate communities have come together to form a single unit. The Mansuris were cotton-threshers and the Tantgaras prepared the guts, used in their threshing apparatus. This necessity brought the two together. They are the followers of the Pir Saiyed Ali Miyan of Vatwa, a Bukhari Saiyad.

The Marwadi Muslims have two different communities, both immigrants from Rajasthan. One is settled in north Gujarat, particularly Sidhpur and Ahmadabad and the other in Vadodara. Pir-muridi is common among them and a majority of them are the murids of the Refai family of Vadodara. They are mainly engaged in labour and small trades.

The Panara or Reshamwala is a craftsman community found both in Ahmadabad and Vadodara. In Ahmadabad, they are called as Panaras, whereas in Vadodara they are known as Reshamwala. They have left their traditional occupation of starching silk and cotton thread and preparing it for weaving. They are now engaged in various miscellaneous occupations.

The Momnas are descendants of Hindus of many castes converted to the Shiah sect by different members of the Ismailiya Saiyads, of whom, Imamshah of Pirana was the most distinguished. The Momins are divided into several sections. Mostly, they are traditionalists, who still venerate their Pirs and render the traditional dues to him. A majority

among them follow the lineal descendants of Pir Mashaikh. The second largest wing is that of Sunnis, mostly of Deobandi inclinations, under whose leadership a well known religious *madrasah* has been functioning at Chhapi in Banaskantha district. A large number among these have also taken to the *Ithana* - A' Shari form of Shi'ism. There are some who accept the Aga Khan as their preceptor and are known as Agakhanis. Those following the Pir call themselves as Shi'a Ja' fari, to distinguish themselves from the above group. This nomenclature is after Jafar at Sadig, the sixth Shi'a Imam; and the Pir Saheb, who preferred this nomenclature, calls himself a Ja'fari. Together with agriculture, they are weavers and almost every household has a handloom. Another branch of the Momins consist of the followers of Imam Shah, and call themselves as Pragati Satpanthi Momins in order to distinguish themselves from the non-Muslim followers of Imam Shah, who in their terminology, are the Guptis' or concealed. The Satpanthi Momins are the followers of Imam Shah and venerate his mausoleum at Pirana.

Behlims are an agrarian community found mostly in north Gujarat. Their customs are close to the Maleks. The title Behlim was granted to Masud Ghazi due to his learning. They venerate pirs and *sahids*. As they are Sunni Hanafis, they use common mosques. In rural areas, they are agriculturists, while in cities they are engaged in various occupations, trade and services.

The Vohoras are divided into two main classes, traders and peasants. Both are quite distinct from each other in manners, customs and religious beliefs. The traders are mostly local converts and are the richest and most prosperous class of Musalmans in the State. They are further divided in three sub-classes viz., the Daudi, the Suleimani and the Aliya Vohoras. Those who accepted Dawood Bin Qutubsha, as the 27th Dai are called the Daudi Vohoras, and those who supported Suleiman Bin Hasan as their 27th Dai are called Suleimani Vohoras. The Aliya Vohoras got separated after the 28th Dai, Shaikh Adam Safiuddin. They accepted Ali Bin Ibrahim as their 29th Dai. They mainly deal in hardware, foodgrains, timber and *timru* leaves. The Sunni Vohoras are the converted Hindus. On account of the efforts of religious leaders (Mullah), who came here during the rule of



employment. By and large, the attitude towards marriage is undergoing rapid transformation and a tendency is developing fast to treat marriage as a contract rather than as a sacrament.

**Death Ceremonies:** The Hindus consider it necessary to perform certain obsequies to propitiate the dead in the belief that the soul might rest in peace as a result of these ceremonies. When a person is about to breathe his last, a silver coin and holy water of Ganga or Narmada is put into his/her mouth. Religious books, generally the *Bhagvad Gita*, are read near the dying person. After he/she dies, the relatives and neighbours assemble and bier of bamboo is prepared and the dead body is taken to the cremation ground. Females do not go to the cremation ground but follow the funeral procession upto the corner of the street wailing and weeping. The custom of beating the breast has almost disappeared in the urban areas.

They return home after taking a bath near a well or a pond. Males wait at the cremation ground till the dead body is completely consumed by fire. Ashes or *phul* are collected on the same or the third day and immersed in sacred river. Memorial rite or *shraddha* is performed from the tenth and continues till the thirteenth day. On the twelfth day is performed a ceremony called *sapindikarana*, whereby the dead severs all earthly connections and joins the *pitru* (manes). On the thirteenth day, various utility articles, used by the deceased are gifted to the family priest or to a near relative like daughter, etc., in the belief that the deceased may enjoy them in another world. During the first year, *masia* or *masiso* (monthly), *Chhamasi* (half yearly) and *varsi* (yearly) *shraddhas* are also performed and thereafter anniversary (*samvatsary*) or *shraddha* is performed according to the day of death. Among the Thakarda community, no religious ceremony is performed at the time of death. Only foodgrains are thrown to birds and grass offered to cows. Milk is distributed among children.

#### Muslim:

The chief rites and ceremonies among the Muslims in general and Sunnis in particular relating to pregnancy and birth, initiation and marriage are described below.

**Birth:** The first pregnancy ceremony is performed in the seventh or the ninth month at the husband's house, while the first delivery is usually

performed at her parental home. On the seventh, fourteenth or twenty-first day after the child birth, the Muslim rite of *akika* sacrifice viz., the shaving of child's head and the killing of a goat or two, is performed.

When the child completes four years, four months and four days, the Bismillah ceremony, (taking the name of god) is performed. The child is made to repeat, after the priest, the opening chapter of the Koran and the relatives are given a feast to commemorate the occasion. The *khatna* (circumcision) ceremony is performed when the boy becomes six or seven years old. There is rejoicing when a boy or girl observes the first Ramzan fast.

**Marriage (Nikah):** Child marriages are not now prevalent. The usual age at which marriage among Muslims takes place is 20-22 years for boys and 15-18 years for girls. Generally the proposal comes from the girl's side and betrothal is decided. In general, a Muslim marriage ceremony lasts for a day only. On the day of marriage, the bridegroom's relatives go to the bride's house in procession called *barat* carrying gifts comprising sweet, dry fruits, ornaments and dress for the bride. The party returns with their trays refilled with clothes for the bridegroom. Usually during the early hours of the night, the groom puts on the wedding clothes with *sehara* (flower sheet) fastened round his forehead, mounts a horse, and starts in procession accompanied by friends and relatives with fanfare of musical band in front. At the bride's house, the bridegroom is led to his seat. Then the Kazi obtains the bride's consent through her agent in consideration of *meher* (dowry) as decided. If approved, he takes the declaration of two other witnesses. He then puts the same questions to the bridegroom. The *meher* or bride— price varies according to the status and economic condition of her parents. Similarly there is a custom of *dehej* or *dejan* wherein different kinds of vessels, cots, mattresses, cupboards, etc., are given to the bride by her parents. The Kazi records these proceedings and showers his blessings on the married couple. The *nikah* or wedding ceremony is followed by an entertainment programme, after which the bridegroom returns home with the bride.

Marriages, between cousins, both parallel and cross, are not prohibited among the Muslims, preference generally being given to the first cousin.



However, sister's daughter is under incest taboo. A Muslim cannot marry his foster-mother or foster-sister, unless the foster-brother and sister were nursed by same woman at intervals widely separated. The Koran permits polygamy to the extent of four wives, but due to the economic pressure, it is seldom resorted to. A man may not marry his wife's sister during his wife's lifetime, unless she has been divorced. Widow re-marriage is in vogue but is avoided by many as a mark of social superiority. *Talaq* (divorce), as recognised by the Mohammedan Law, is at the option of the husband, but among higher classes it is resorted to only when all attempts at rapprochement have failed.

**Death Ceremonies:** To a person about to die, the *sura-e-yasin* from the Koran is read out in an undertone. The creed and prayer for forgiveness are recited, so that the dying person may also repeat it, and a few drops of honey or sugared water are put into his mouth. After he/she breathes his/her last, the dead body is bathed and placed in *janaja* or coffin. Flowers are placed on it. A *kafan* (shroud) consisting of three white pieces of cloth to which two more pieces, namely *simabandh* and *odhani* are added in the case of a female, is spread on the dead body. Then the bier is lifted on the shoulders of relatives and other Muslims and taken to the graveyard, where the last prayers are offered. Till the third day, no food is cooked at the mourners', but friends or relatives of the deceased send cooked meals or cook them at their expense at the house of the former. On the third day, *jiyarat* ceremony is performed wherein relatives are feasted. *Ghadi* ceremony is performed on the 40th day, when the relatives and friends are feasted. On this day, relatives visit the cemetery and offer *dhup* or *agarbatti* and put flowers on the tomb. Thereafter, they visit the tomb only on religious occasions or on the anniversary.

The only form of mourning laid down by the Muslim Law is the strict seclusion of the widow in the case of the death of the head of the family. Unless forced to do so, she never leaves the house for four months and ten days. Besides this, some of the customs prevalent among the Hindus are also practised. The widow breaks her bangles and never again wears them. She does not put on a nose ring. If she is young, she wears dark coloured dress and white one in case of old.

**Christian:**

**Birth:** Christians have adopted the ceremony of *simant* from Hindus and virtually follow it. Well educated Christians, however, do not perform this ceremony. *Chhathi* ceremony is not performed. Naming ceremony or baptism is performed in the Church in the presence of priest. Annual birthdays are usually celebrated.

**Marriage:** Marriages take place only when a boy and a girl are adult. The usual age of marriage is over 18 for girls and about 25 years for boys. Widow remarriages are permitted and preferred. Instances of separation or divorce are rare. In the case of separation, the priest is called and the differences between the couple are usually settled. When marriage day is fixed, the priest, who is informed in advance, announces it on three successive Sundays. The marriage ceremony usually takes place in the morning when relatives and friends of both sides are invited. The priest performs the marriage ceremony and reads Bible. The bridegroom wears coat, pant, tie, etc., while the face of the bride is covered under *sari*. Feast is common on the marriage-day. The *hastamelap* takes place after taking consent of the bride and the bridegroom.

**Death:** The Bible is read near the dead body and when relatives and neighbours assemble, the dead body is taken to the cremetery on a coffin. The dead body is placed in a pit of about four feet deep with the head facing west. A cross is put over the dead body. Females follow the funeral procession up to the street and weeping continues till the males return. No religious ceremony is performed, but the children are feasted. Bereavement or *shok* is observed for ten days, during which Christians do not eat sweets or celebrate any festive occasion.

**Parsi:**

**Birth:** The birth of a child is considered as an auspicious occasion and is celebrated with joy and happiness in the family. Immediately after the birth of a child, formerly an oil-lamp was lighted in the room and was kept burning for some days. This lamp signified the presence of a divinity for the protection of the newly born babe. However, this practice is not in vogue at present.

Immediately after the child birth the child is made to drink a few drops of honey. The mother observes seclusion for a period of forty days and takes complete rest and abstains from normal life.